

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO EXCHANGE CONCERT.

Student Chamber Music Ensembles

MICHEL WHITE	VIOLIN
RENNIE REGEHR	VIOLA
JILL VITOLS	CELLO
KENNETH HULL	PIANO
ELIZABETH LAMBERT	OBOE
JENNY REGEHR	PIANO

8:30 p.m. Walter Hall
Edward Johnson Building
Wednesday, February 1, 1978

PROGRAM

Quartet in F Major, K. 370 (K.368b)

W.A. Mozart

Allegro
Adagio
Allegro

The F Major Quartet, Mozart's only composition for oboe and strings, was completed in the early months of 1781, during the period when he was occupied with the first performance of Idomeneo at the electoral court in Munich. Although the Quartet was composed for the renowned oboist, Friedrich Rammn, the wind instrument does not completely dominate the strings as is the case in the earlier flute quartets. However, the oboe is still shown to advantage within contrapuntal textures and passages of melody with simple accompaniment. It is this union of classical chamber music and elements of the concertante style (note the provision for a cadenza in the slow movement) that prompted Alfred Einstein to compare the work most favourably to the well-known clarinet Quintet in A, K. 581.

The lingering influence of the style galant is apparent throughout the Oboe Quartet, especially in the melodic ornamentation of the elegant Allegro movements. A satisfying contrast to the charming lightness of the outer movements is found in the intense, long-breathed Adagio. The finale, a rondo, contains a feature of particular note for its rarity in Mozart: in the second episode the oboe plays a lyrical melody in common time over an accompaniment in 6/8 by the strings.

Suite for Viola and Piano

E. Bloch

Lento-Allegro-Moderato
Allegro ironico (Scherzo)
Lento
Molto vivo

Earlier in this century Ernest Bloch (1880-1959) enjoyed much popularity as a composer and teacher, especially in his adopted home, the United States. Although his works are not as widely performed as before, Bloch's personal idiom is still able to captivate the listener with its unique synthesis of contrasting stylistic elements. The exotic flavour of the thematic material, the Lisztian rhetoric, and the glimpses of Ravel's harmonies and piano figurations are but a few facets of the Suite for Viola and Piano (1919) which together illustrate the breadth of Bloch's eclecticism.

The Suite provides an interesting example of Bloch's use of both classical and romantic formal procedures to control the rhapsodic flow of emotion-charged ideas. Like many works of the previous century, the movements are strongly linked by common thematic material--note the two main themes which are fully stated in the Allegro of the opening movement. Beyond the cyclic structure of the Suite, traditional classical forms, though treated with considerable latitude, impose a logical dramatic plan on the individual movements.

The spirit of the dance is presented in different guises throughout the Suite. The first movement, the longest by far, is dominated by a sense of mystery which perhaps may be imaginatively related to a dance of creation--that is, the generation of the musical thoughts that form the basis of the entire work. The biting, dry humour and insistent rhythms of the Scherzo are contrasted with the smooth, almost eerie lines of its corresponding Trio. An underlying current of agitation and urgency in the opening movements is assuaged in the rich, dark colours and sustained lyricism of the Lento. The finale is the most brilliant and optimistic movement. Its rhythmic vitality and passages of chord clusters suggest a reference to Bloch's contemporary, Bela Bartók.

The success of the Suite was confirmed by the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Award presented in 1920. In this year Bloch completed the orchestral version that was clearly anticipated in the style of his piano writing.

INTERMISSION

Quartet in E flat Major, Op. 47

R. Schumann

Sostenuto assai-Allegro ma non troppo
Molto vivace (Scherzo)
Andante cantabile
Vivace (Finale)

Following the year devoted to Lieder (1840) and the year that saw the completion of both the Spring Symphony and the original version of the D minor Symphony (1841), Schumann studied the principal exponents of the classical quartet and, in his major chamber works composed in 1842 (including the three string Quartets Op. 41, the piano Quintet Op. 44, and the piano Quartet Op. 47), he revealed his admiration and respect for his predecessors, and, above all, for Beethoven.

The solemn introduction of the piano Quartet foreshadows the first theme of the vigorous Allegro section. The reappearance of this introductory material in the development of the sonata is reminiscent of Beethoven's Quartet Op. 127 in the same key. Schumann's use of syncopation is of particular interest. In the first movement it heightens the passionate return to the recapitulation. A sequence of syncopated chords in the second Trio of the Scherzo completely obscures the metre, and, when placed in juxtaposition with the breathtaking motion of the Scherzo, creates a truly inspired moment. The singing 'cello line that opens the Andante cantabile sets a dreamy mood easily associated with the character of Eusebius. After an excursion into G-flat major, the theme returns with an unobtrusive, florid countermelody. The ternary form concludes with simple counterpoint and graceful figures over a tonic pedal sustained by the 'cello (the 'cello must be specially tuned to accommodate the low B flat). The energetic Finale, linked thematically to the closing passage of the Andante cantabile, is the most thoroughly contrapuntal of the movements. The excitement and tension generated by the fugato episodes is not released until the rush to the final cadence.

The Quartet Op. 47 is often criticized for the lack of balance between the participants. The piano, Schumann's favorite instrument, tends to dominate the texture, and, in fact, is scarcely given a rest. However, the prominence of this part need not detract from the obvious dramatic power of the work as a whole.

Notes by William R. Bowen

NEXT EVENT: University of Toronto Wind Symphony, February 5, 3 p.m.
MacMillan Theatre. No admission charge.